



COALITION OF OREGON LAND TRUSTS

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March 19, 2021

Informational Testimony Re: 2594

To the House Committee on Water:

The Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts (COLT) is the central voice for 29 land conservation organizations in Oregon that work to protect land and connect people to nature. The work of COLT and our members ensure that Oregon's natural systems, watersheds and working lands are protected for future generations.

The focus of HB 2594 is to ensure local communities have access to clean and secure water. While there are regulatory pathways that provide this assurance, **there are also voluntary tools to support landowners and local communities in securing clean drinking water.** Land trusts have long been key partners in protecting Oregon's water. These organizations work with landowners and local communities to protect and restore land for fish and wildlife and for people.

The original version of HB 2594 was directed at protecting source water areas in Oregon, and the -1 amendments have changed the bill to focus on State rules governing source areas for drinking water. COLT is submitting this testimony to provide insight on a third avenue that can help landowners and water providers secure clean water. Our Coalition would like to express the following:

- Protecting land is critical to protecting community drinking water. Without land protection communities are being forced to rely on back up supplies, make expensive upgrades, and even shut off water to address land uses that are negatively impacting their water supply.
- We have the information to understand the places we need to protect (the state has done this work).
- Communities across Oregon are engaged and want to see their drinking water protected- from Arch Cape on the coast, to Rhododendron, to Corbett.
- Oregon's land trust community includes partners that are ready and willing to support communities in protecting their drinking water. Land trusts can leverage voluntary tools like land acquisition and conservation easements to help communities and landowners.
- Small communities are at a disadvantage when they try to protect their source areas. In Oregon 75% of surface water systems have less than 3,000 ratepayers. New funding sources are needed.
- As a state we need to address this issue to provide communities with the tools they need to protect their water. This is a critical piece of making Oregon more water resilient.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Kelley Beamer, Executive Director (COLT)

23 MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS: BLUE MOUNTAIN LAND TRUST CENTER FOR NATURAL LANDS MANAGEMENT
COLUMBIA LAND TRUST DESCHUTES LAND TRUST DUCKS UNLIMITED FRIENDS OF THE COLUMBIA GORGE LAND TRUST
FOREST PARK CONSERVANCY GREENBELT LAND TRUST KLAMATH LAKE LAND TRUST LOWER NEHALEM COMMUNITY TRUST
MCKENZIE RIVER TRUST NORTH COAST LAND CONSERVANCY NORTHWEST RANGELAND TRUST OREGON DESERT LAND TRUST
PACIFIC FOREST TRUST SOUTHERN OREGON LAND CONSERVANCY THE CONSERVATION FUND THE NATURE CONSERVANCY IN OREGON
THE TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND THE WETLANDS CONSERVANCY WALLOWA LAND TRUST WESTERN RIVERS CONSERVANCY
WILD RIVERS LAND TRUST **6 ASSOCIATE MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS:** CLACKAMAS SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
EAST MULTNOMAH SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT HELVETIA COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION OREGON AGRICULTURAL TRUST
TUALATIN SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT YAMHILL SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT